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MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

A

Discourse,

THE

SUBSTANCE OF WHICH WAS DELIVERED

BEFORE THE

SYNOD OF PHILADELPHIA,

AT ITS

LATE MEETING IN HARRISBURG, (PA.) OCT. 1827.

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PREFACE.

The Synod of Philadelphia, by whose appointment the following discourse was delivered, were kind enough to express an opinion, (in a resolution to that effect,) favourable to its publication. The writer however, was not then satisfied, that it was his duty to appear before the public as an author, at all; and especially, on a subject of such vital moment to the church of God, and in the discussion of topics so intimately connected with the character and work of the ministers of reconciliation. The delay of its appearance until the present time, has been occasioned, partly by the difficulty of settling the question of publication. And then, after it was decided, at the instance of judicious friends, whose opinions were requested—to put it to press, a still farther delay became necessary in preparing the manuscript for that use.

In doing this, some local and other allusions not proper for publication, have been omitted: the discussion has been in some cases expanded: and new illustrations

introduced. The substance of the discourse however, and the train of thought have been faithfully retained.

This very imperfect attempt, to set in its true light, the most important of all human functions, is respectfully and affectionately dedicated to the Synod of Philadelphia, and especially to the more youthful servants of our Lord, who have recently entered on, or are now looking to, the sacred office, by their friend and brother,

THE AUTHOR.

A SERMON.

MATTHEW xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

And Jesus spake unto them saying; All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

THE religion of Christ was designed by its author to fill and to rule the world.

From distant ages it has been a subject of promise, and of prophecy in the word of God, "*that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea: that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ:* and that *all flesh shall together see, the salvation of God.*"

The Apostle Paul in his celebrated discourse before the Areopagus at Athens, announces christianity, to the exclusion of all other systems, as the religion of mankind. The nature of man required some religion, and his state of sin, the religion of Christ. As *God had made of* ONE BLOOD *all nations*, however scattered over *all the face of the earth*, so one system of reli-

gion was alike adapted to all; that system was christianity. What therefore God had provided through the death, and attested by the resurrection of his Son, *He commanded all men, every where* to receive, under the awful sanctions of an appointed and approaching day of judgment.*

It is the "*common salvation.*" "Like the rising sun, it belongs to all."

The passage selected for the text, with the kindred parts of the other Evangelists, embodies the same great truth, in the form of a command from the head of the church, and the sovereign of the world. "*All power is given unto me, &c. &c.; go ye therefore and teach all nations; preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.*"

It exhibits a missionary charter founded in divine right, sustained by divine power, extending through all ages, and embracing all nations, in its provisions and its penalties.

And yet after the lapse of nearly eighteen centuries since this command was given, our holy religion has made but little more progress through the earth, than it had done at the death of the last Apostle. Three quarters of our globe, have never heard the name of Jesus. Of the eight or nine hundred millions of men computed now to inhabit the world, only two hundred

* Acts xvii. 16—32.

millions are even nominally christians; of these only six or seven millions at most, are supposed to be christians in fact; and they, it is by common consent allowed, are, as a body, by no means awake to the claims of their Lord upon them: they display in no adequate measure, the spirit of Jesus, in their love for the souls of men: and that union of heart and action, in spreading the gospel on which God's promised blessing forever rests, and which carries conviction and conquest with it wherever it turns, has well-nigh perished, amidst the feuds and schisms of a thousand sects.

And while this is the condition of the christian church, it is almost to calculation true, so far as it can be a matter of human knowledge, that more of our race *die every week*, than are converted to Christ *throughout the world every year!*

Such are the facts which stare us in the face, in the nineteenth century of the christian dispensation.

And can it be true, that this is the world for which the Redeemer died; and is this that body of which he is the head? Are these the nations to which, eighteen centuries ago, he commanded his gospel to be preached?

And have so many "successive worlds" of immortal men, been swept to eternity, in that long, dark night of years, without ever hearing of a Saviour's love, while the word of life, lay buried in the church, like the roll which was rescued, by the hand of Hilkiah, from the ruins of the Temple?

No christian man, can contrast the fulness of the divine provision, and the antiquity of the divine command to make that provision known to all that live, with the present very limited influence of christianity in the world, without emotions that are awful, and *oppressive* to his soul!

For an issue so disastrous, for a failure so great and dreadful, there must exist some cause—and that cause must stand connected with *no common responsibility.*

In searching for this cause, it cannot be said, that God has so decreed it: for, while it is true that "*he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,*" it is in no such way as to impair the free and responsible agency of his creatures.* The same reasoning from the divine purpose which will excuse our neglect of sending the gospel to mankind, will acquit us of the guilt of not being christians ourselves;—for our own state and character are as much the effect of the sovereign will and power of God, as the state and character of other men and other nations. It is in vain therefore, to appeal to the divine sovereignty, for the purpose of removing responsibility from those to whom the Son of God especially entrusted the publication of his gospel.

And yet it is to be feared, that what is called by an able modern author† Religious Fatalism, "that is, permitting the unmolested existence of sin" in the

*Acts ii. 23, compared with John xix. 11. †Foster.

heathen world, because God permits it—leaving the nations that know not God without the gospel, under the falacious notion that his time for them to receive it has not arrived—is extensively prevalent in the christian church.

Will it be said, that the opportunity of having the gospel in substance, was afforded in Noah to all nations; but directly and fully, in the ministry of the Apostles; and that having expelled it by resistance, or lost it by neglect, they were *given over by God*, to a *reprobate mind?*

However true this may be, as to the ages immediately following the epochs referred to, it can with no propriety, be affirmed of the present generations of the heathen, or of those, for ages anterior; for as neither we, nor our fathers, have made known to them the salvation of Christ, they can with no truth, be said to have rejected it, or to have lost it.

But the unconditional command of God, leaves no discretionary power with the depositaries of the gospel. "*Thou shalt speak my words unto them whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear;*"* and the only alternative allowed to the people, is submission or ruin;—"*He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.*" No rejection, no loss of the truth therefore, by the nations of the earth, can in the least degree, remit the obligation of Christ's commissioned agents, whoever they may be,

*Ezekiel ii. 7.

"to preach the gospel to every creature, even to the end of the world."

And again; the gospel is attended by the power of God. It comprises the means of its own propagation, when administered aright. It comes prepared to overpower all resistance. It goes forth from God, *conquering and* TO *conquer*—appointed by Heaven, "to have and to hold" all lands in the Saviour's name.

Whatever form then, of opposition to the gospel, the wickedness of men, or of devils may assume—however much it may be resisted, or however much neglected, and for a season lost—yet, that cannot be the reason of the gospel's failure, which the gospel came divinely furnished and commissioned to destroy.

And what shall we say of those countries in which *"the people have been destroyed for lack of knowledge,"* fast by the sanctuaries of the living God? What of those countries in which the matchless art of printing, has seemed to restore the lost gift of tongues, and Bible societies have substantiated, in their mighty and diffusive operation, the type of a great river, beheld in the visions of the prophet, issuing from the temple of God—and *yet the people perish?* Is there not something more than divine sovereignty, or human guilt in general, to be looked for, as explanatory of the facts—that the Bible is closed against the people—or if unsealed, and diffused, that it exerts no ascendant power upon the *mass* of the people—and that even when the gospel is professedly preached and

heard, so little is achieved commensurate to the bounty of God, or the spiritual wants of men?

It appearing then, that no sufficient reason can *elsewhere* be found, for the very partial influence of our holy religion in the world, we turn to the christian church. And here we approach the limits of a direct and fearful responsibility. Here is *the pillar—the ground of the truth.* From this as the seat of God, and the centre of action, must the *word of the Lord be sounded out*, into all the world—or his people must meet the hot displeasure of their sovereign Lord.

But there is a *higher* responsibility still, than that which appertains to the church in general. There are those to whom the planting, the watering and the extending, even of the church itself, are under God committed. Wherefore, the inquiry ascends to the office, and attaches the persons of the ministers of Christ.

In pursuing this subject, we shall attempt to establish the following proposition, viz:

THAT THE MINISTERS OF RECONCILIATION, BEING THE AUTHORISED FUNCTIONARIES IN THIS GREAT WORK, ANY FAILURE IN ITS SUCCESS, MUST ALWAYS BE OWING MAINLY, TO THEIR ABUSE OF THEIR SOLEMN TRUST.

For, I. THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL IS GOD'S STANDING ORDINANCE FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

It is not made a question, by any who profess to believe the Bible, whether those honoured personages,

to whom our text was directly addressed, were clothed by their Lord with a full commission for all nations during their natural lives—or whether their extraordinary efforts in spreading the gospel under that commission, were sustained by his authority, and made triumphant by his power.

But they are gone, long gone, to receive the recompense of reward on high; and can only mingle now, in the service of our earth, with those celestial visitants, who are sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation!*

Who then shall succeed to their toils and labours, in the Saviour's cause? Did they finish the work which the gospel was intended to accomplish? Did they so plant the tree of life, that thenceforward it would yield spontaneous fruits, and without the cultivating hand of man, unfold those leaves which are for the healing of the nations? Did they make these nations willing to come for its blessings from the dark corners of the earth, and the distant islands of the sea? Did they make it possible for men to call on him in whom they have not believed; to believe in him of whom they have not heard; or to hear without a PREACHER?†

It can only be the fanatic, or the infidel, who contends for the cessation of the ministerial office and duties, in the person of the Apostles. *As* it has pleased God "*by the foolishness of preaching, to save them*

*Revelations xxii. 11. † Romans ix. 14.

that believe, so there will be need of a ministry, while there are sinners to be saved.

Timothy was not an apostle; yet Paul addresses him in such language as this: "the things that thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."* Here are at least two generations of ministers, besides the apostles, distinctly recognized. The text itself, is direct and conclusive, as to the perpetuity of the office. "Go ye into all the world—teach all nations—and lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world;" i. e. of the christian state or age, which is confessedly the last dispensation of God to man, and therefore, must reach to the close of time.

The office being then perpetual, in its essential functions, we need not stay to discuss the *divine right*, of sects and names. Wherever the office is lodged, there this appeal asks a hearing in the name of Jesus. Let those who think they hold it, take with it all its responsible services, and obligations. They who claim this high prerogative, are bound to exhibit a corresponding distinction, in the superiority of their endowments, and the success of their ministrations. It does not a little weaken the assumptions occasionally made on this subject, to find that *they* often lay most stress upon their exclusive succession to the apostles of Christ, who display fewest evidences of a divine commission, in their personal qualifications, or ministerial work.

*2 Tim. ii. 2—Titus i. 5—Ephes. iv. 7—14—and Acts xx. 28.

But the word of God reveals to us not only the perpetuity of the ministry as a standing ordinance, but the concomitant fact, that it has been set apart and furnished by the Deity, for the great work of converting the world. Thus the preachers of the gospel are styled the "ambassadors of Christ" to men, proclaiming the message of reconciliation;* wherever they go, in the spirit of their station, they are said, "to triumph in Christ," and to make "manifest the savour of his knowledge:" the result of their ministrations is so decisive, that they become of necessity, "a savour of life, or a savour of death to every hearer;" and it is unto God "a *sweet* savour," however it may result; and though of themselves they are in no sense sufficient; for who is sufficient for these things? yet they are qualified abundantly by Christ their head, who sent, and who sustains them.† *In Him "they can do all things"—"their sufficiency is of God;"* by his power and spirit they are made *"able ministers of the New Testament."* Of them the Redeemer said, *"he that receiveth* YOU, *receiveth* ME, *and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."*‡

Perhaps a very brief analysis of the text will furnish as comprehensive a view as the Bible affords, of the divine authority, the fitness, the efficacy, and consequent accountableness of this office, in the whole extent of its operations, to the end of time. Thus it is

* 2 Cor. v. 18. † 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6. ‡ Math. x. 40.

written, "go ye, and teach all nations, and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;"—that is, your office and its duties have no limit, but the sphere of the earth, and the end of time. "Teach all nations:" *i. e.* evangelize them, convert them from heathenism to christianity, and from sin to God. "Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" *i. e.* according to the model given you, found and fashion my church, and admit them into it. "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:" *i. e.* edify them, instruct them, lead them on from the first principles of the doctrine of Christ unto perfection; and my reign establish in the church thus erected. "All power is given unto me in heaven, and in earth, and lo, I am with you always," &c. &c.: that is, do all in my name, by my power, and to my glory, and I will give efficacy to the means you use, and triumph to the cause you have undertaken. Such is a compendious view of the broad and divinely sanctioned commission, given to the apostles and their successors to the end of the world.

But it is a distressing truth that the distinguished office thus conferred, may be so impaired by corruption, or crippled by interference, that the work of the gospel cannot, to any adequate degree, be carried on through its agency.

If God *has* a plan for the publication of the gospel, that plan must be the *best;* and it is equally evident

that it must have been provided from the origin of the system; for by it the system is, instrumentally, to be kept alive and extended in the world: it is also evident that God's plan, whatever it may be, is of paramount authority and perpetual obligation: and it must be as much beyond the improvement, as it is above the control of men. Every addition must be a clog; every subtraction must weaken it; and every change, being from *the divine* to *the human* in the provision, must just so far impair its goodly operation. The divine arrangement, in its original constitution, must be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." To supersede the plan of God then, is of consequence, to assail the sovereignty and wisdom of its author, to violate the charter of the church, and retard the conversion of the world.

Now it is obvious, from what has been said, that God has originated such a plan, for the publication of the gospel; and that it is directly announced in the passage of scripture under our consideration:—or in other words, *the ministry of reconciliation, is God's standing ordinance, for the conversion of the world.*

It follows then, that every interference with this sacred and awful office, must affect, in its measure, the conversion of the world. If it be not brought into adequate use,—if it be committed to UNHOLY, ignorant, or designing men—if, at home and abroad they be not called of God—if they enter on its solemn duties encumbered by any thing extraneous, any thing *earthly*, any thing selfish—if they *depend* on any helps but those

peculiar to their function, and derived from God, whether it be "power or might" or learning, or eloquence, or wealth, or patronage—in the same degree will their hands be held, and their success restricted. The power of the service will be the Nazarite's power no more: the office will be shorn of its strength: its glory will have departed! If *they* do not go forth, all other schemes will be defective; all other efforts, to a great extent, will fail. If they go forth in any but the *true spirit* and form of character, they too must fail. But wise and faithful servants will be sustained by the power of God, and made abundantly successful in their ministrations.

It is owing, we suppose, to a want of reflection, that good men are sometimes heard speaking to each other of the need, and praying to heaven for the gift, of new and untried means for the conversion of the world. Essays to do good auxiliary to the great plan of spreading the gospel by a standing ministry, are highly to be commended. Whatever will aid IT in bringing GOD'S TRUTH to bear upon the souls of men, we should with all our power promote. An inventive benevolence in this way distinguishes, and adorns the age in which we live. But it is to be feared, that in our busy ingenuity, we do not sufficiently realize the existence, perfection, and authority of the divine arrangement. Whilst we are adventuring upon a world of new expedients, there slumbers, in the bosom of the church, that ordinance, which has power from God, to recal to the field the

"sons of consolation," and "the sons of thunder." In its proper exercise, the days of Paul, of Apollos and of Cephas, might revisit our earth.

It is, therefore, perhaps, the most hopeful token of the present age, that many of the people of God, are beginning to sigh for the spirit, and to restore the institutions of primitive christianity. Whatever indicates in our day, a reverence for the character of the primeval church, whatever is heard to *"ask for the old paths,"* and seen *"to walk where is the good way,"* foretells the coming of a better era.

We have long enough soothed ourselves to rest, by comparing the partial efforts made for the gospel in our own day, with the lethargy of ages recently elapsed. It is time we had returned for our model, to the stature and spirit of the apostolic day; and for our sphere of action to the family of man. It is time that Christ Jesus were restored, in his fulness to the ministry; and the ministry displayed to the world, in the whole armour of God. Consider,

II. THAT THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST, IF FAITHFUL TO THEIR TRUST, MAY HAVE IN EVERY AGE OF THE WORLD ALL THE HELPS THAT WERE AFFORDED, EVEN TO THE APOSTLES THEMSELVES; *i. e.* ALL THAT ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE RIGHT AND SUCCESSFUL DISCHARGE OF THE DUTIES OF THE OFFICE.

The nature of this service, demands help from ABOVE at every step. The office of the ministry as we have shown, is to endure to the end of time: and therefore

the qualifications necessary to the proper discharge of its duties, must be perpetual also. It is true the Apostles had some peculiar gifts, because they were in peculiar circumstances. They had the gifts of inspiration, of miracles, of prophecy, and of tongues. Through them, as instruments, the system of christianity was established in the world; and for this they required, and of course received, extraordinary aids. It was fitting that the Deity, should appoint for the religion of his Son, a public entry into the world, signalized by the display of divine glory: and that its title to the earth, should be ratified in the sight of all nations, by the King of kings. But we have the *results* of the divine interposition, and of these uncommon endowments, though we have not the *endowments themselves.* Thus while we have not their inspiration, we have the infallible word, which they were in that way, qualified to record for every succeeding age: for "*all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.** We have not the gift of prophecy or of miracles; but we have the testimony of both, and the "germinating" testimony of the former; and at the same time, resources equally adequate, though not so direct from Heaven, are afforded us, for acquiring the

* 2 Timothy iii. 16, 17, and 1 Peter i. 11, 12.

languages, and thus reaching the consciences, of all nations. Their official relation is to ours, what the first of each order of tree and of plant at the creation was, to each of the same order, since, in continued succession. We are told that the *first* of each order of tree and plant sprang full formed and perfect, from the hand of the Creator. As yet there was no sun, no rain, no dew, nor man to till the ground. "*But* EACH *had its* SEED IN *itself*;" and anon the process of *growth*, was to succeed that of primitive creation. "*There went up a mist from the earth which watered the whole face of the ground:*"* and the rain descended, and the sun shone forth; thenceforward the oak was to spring from the acorn; from the impalpable seed, was to arise the tree, which lodges the fowls of heaven, in its branches; and divine power was to carry on its operations, clothed in the form of visible weakness. So is it, in the new, and more glorious creation of the Son of God. It was needful that miraculous, and extraordinary powers should attend the first preaching of the gospel, and establish it in the world. This done, the system was stripped of its *visible* power, and in the form of apparently unattended weakness, set to *grow* in the earth. The miraculous endowments of the primitive ministry had done their part; and the more natural, but through God, not less effectual process of ordinary means, was now to take their place. But

* Genesis i. 11, 12, and ii. 5, 6.

God's ministering servants still have all the helps that were essential to the Apostles, supposing the kingdom of Christ set up in the world; nay they have all that God ever made use of, so far as we know, in the Apostles themselves, for the conversion of the souls of men.

It may not be unprofitable to examine, more minutely, this interesting subject.

1. We have a great system of truth—whose claim to be a revelation from God, is confirmed to us by the most indisputable evidence—which is our perfect, and exclusive guide in instructing mankind. It makes known to us infallibly, the nature, will, and law of God; our origin, condition and eternal prospects; our fall by sin, with its ruinous results here and hereafter; and above all, displays in the life, the sacrifice, the resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God, the means of our recovery from eternal death. As it has been pertinently said, "the materials of our work are thus made ready to our hands, and are at the same time admirably adapted to our use. The facts exhibited, are more extraordinary than ever entered the mind of man, in its widest excursions, combining all the sobriety of truth with more than the grandeur of fiction; and the doctrines, connected with these facts, by the easiest and most natural inference, are of infinite moment. Our situation compared with other speakers, resembles the Angel of the Apocalypse, who was seen standing in the sun."*

* Robert Hall.

However then, the Apostles were made to differ from their successors, in the *manner* of furnishing them for their ministry, the *matter* of their preaching, is, in its perfection and fulness, supplied to us in the written word; and the TRUTH which it imparts, is, the same power of God, the same "sword of the Spirit" in our use, as it was in theirs, when we "handle" it under the guidance of that omnipotent agent. For,

2. WE HAVE THE SAME SPIRIT OF OFFICE WITH THE APOSTLES.

The discontinuance of the gift of inspiration, and the reasons for it, have been already mentioned. The same Spirit of truth, however, who indicted the sacred scriptures, still accompanies their faithful dispensation, by the appointed ministers of Christ. Without this endowment from on high, they are totally unfit for the sacred office; they resemble "mariners, who should leave the winds out of the account of forces, in preparing a vessel for the ocean; and think only of oars and rowers." "*The demonstration of the Spirit,*"* is the power of the ministry. Divine aid is the measure of its success; and so dependence on the Spirit through whom it is dispensed, is the strength, as it is the distinguishing characteristic, of every devoted servant of Jesus Christ. "*The spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Christ,*" is "*granted*" by the head of the church to all his members; but to his

* 1 Corinthians ii. 4, 10, 11, 12.

ministering servants, the Spirit of their office is promised as its inseparable concomitant, and the only efficient cause of its success in the world. "*It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the* COMFORTER *will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you. And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The Father will give him unto you, that he may abide with you forever; even the* SPIRIT OF TRUTH; *whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.*"*

He appears no longer in cloven tongues and wonder-stirring miracles of visible divinity. The Lord is not in the great and strong wind which rent the mountains, and brake the rocks in pieces; nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire. But "yet" does the Lord pass by us: and to those that like the holy prophet wait and watch for him on Horeb, his presence is yet given, in "*the still small voice*" of spiritual manifestation.† His promise and his power still attend the heralds of his word.

Never perhaps, since the apostolic age, has the Holy Spirit been so abundantly, as in this century, poured out on the earth. It is becoming indeed, the era of the Spirit's ministration. *Revivals* of religion, properly so called, were perhaps never more deep, or more transforming; and never was the glory of Jesus more clearly

*John xvi. 7—10, and xiv. 16, 17. †1 Kings xix. 11, 12.

displayed, in the conversion of a great multitude of sinners unto God.

Like all things heavenly that come down to dwell on earth, *this* divine influence, has been sometimes diluted, and sometimes profaned. But shall we therefore, reject, or deride the work of the Almighty? As well might we charge with impurity, the genial showers of heaven, because in descending to water the earth, many a "pellucid drop" is absorbed in the desert, rebounds from the rugged rock, or mingles with the putrid pool.

May these revivals of the work of the Lord, be the first fruits of that more copious effusion of the Spirit, by which a nation shall be born in a day!

3. As heralds, or preachers of the gospel, we have the entire endowment, or qualification of the Apostles.

It is striking to observe, that when miracles were wrought, in aid of the Apostles, it was only to make way for them as *preachers;* and it was the truth preached, not the miracle, that under God, did the work of conversion.

On the day of Pentecost, while the miracle astounded, and rivetted the assembly, it was the *preaching of the gospel*, which "pricked to the heart" the repenting multitude, and indicated, to their convicted consciences, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And in the very interesting example of Cornelius, though an angel, and two revelations, intervened, during the progress of the events recorded,

it was only to prepare the way for the preacher and his hearers, to meet on the ground of the gospel; and all extraordinary interposition then gave place to the established ordinances of the church. So also it was with the Apostles of Christ, and the jailor at Philippi. The earthquake shook the foundations of the prison-house, and rent its massive bolts away. The chains of the prisoners fell from around them, by the miraculous power of God. But it was the preaching of the cross, which emancipated from the still heavier chains of sin, the soul of the trembling jailor. It is by divine arrangement, a great general principle, that the preaching of Christ crucified, is the power of God unto salvation. "*After that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*"* There is in this service, no external splendor; no intrinsic power: but it HAS PLEASED GOD by it, in a principle degree, to extend the influence of the truth on earth. Nor was its efficacy restricted to apostolic heralds. Wherever Jesus is directly preached unto men; wherever the philosophical, diluted, artificial style of pulpit-address is laid aside; and the eloquence of simple truth, common sense, and a warm heart, in love with human happiness and divine glory, are found; in a word, wherever, instead of *presenting himself*, the preacher becomes God's medium to the people, and is

* 1 Corinthians i. 21.

lost to their view, in the heavenly light with which he is invested, *there* still, and as ever, is it the power of God.

Not that God's word is unequal to the work of its own interpretation, or can be said without the most daring presumption and impiety, when unattended and alone, to "injure" his creatures. But simply that it HAS PLEASED GOD, by the ministry, to take the attention of mankind, and thus direct them to the written word; or where that word is not possessed, the *truth spoken*, is still the power of God unto salvation; and as a general fact, the preaching of the gospel has been appointed and blessed by God, to form the tie, which connects the knowledge of the truth, with the saving of the soul.

Now this help, in its essential, efficient character, still attends the ministers of reconciliation. And perhaps the word of God has never had so deep, so extended a hearing from the earth, as now. Especially is this true, of the happy land in which we live. Here where discussion is so free, and the gospel so unfettered; where every variety of opinion is tolerated, and every form of sect protected; where Bibles begin so much to abound; where the love of liberty is identified with an enthusiastic regard for public speaking; where the genius of our institutions promotes a spirit of inquiry; and the diffusion of knowledge is felt to be the best security to our inestimable rights; the PULPIT is destined, if properly sustained, to exert a moral power, heretofore unknown on earth.

4. We have, in common with the Apostles, the pastoral work and power; that is, authority from God, and welcome, or at least permission from men, to *preach*, not only "*publicly*," but "from house to house." Have we not this admirable help, *more* abundantly than they? Are there not more houses open to us? more of our fellow-men who will hear? Is it not as efficient now, as it was then? The want of its efficient power, is, we fear, only the absence of its efficient use. It domesticates the gospel at the fireside; follows the family home; lays hold on all the tender, and strong, and peculiar associations of the domestic circle; it traces the public hearer into private life; analyzes the large assembly into its individual parts; presses the truth upon each person, and adapts it to each case. It causes the gospel to be heard during the week, by those who will not hear it on the Sabbath-day; it pursues the sinner to his last retreat; insulates his soul from all the world, and lodges in its deepest chambers, the call of God. It arrests the conscience in the pungent personality of the law of God, saying "thou art the man;" while it points the despairing penitent, to Jesus on the cross.

5. We have no less than they, the providence of God to sustain us in the work of the gospel. "All power, in heaven and in earth" attends us, in the presence of him who "is head over all things to the church," not only in wielding the means of grace, but in preparing the way for their reception, and in

over-ruling all things for their success. The divine Redeemer is ever present, with all, with each of his faithful servants, by his living power and attendant aid. They cannot go, where he is not. Wherever he is, it is on their side; "with them;" and to bless them. he loves the gospel; he loves the world; and he has appointed them to go forth, bearing the one unto the other; and will he not sustain them in their office? Will he surrender that "banner which he has given us to be displayed, because of the truth?" Will he who for the hope of Israel, trod the wine-press alone, when of the people there was none with him; and came with dyed garments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of his strength, now retire from the field, where his soldiery are contending with the powers of darkness; and taking possession, in his name, of the hearts of men?

This is a source of help, which no remoteness of place, no lapse of ages, no change of dispensation can at all impair. It is not merely God's favour; it is God Himself, with us; and it cannot waste, while he endures.

What may be called *providential interpositions*, for the gospel, have, in latter times, exceeded even those vouchsafed to the apostles. The art of printing, that illustrious invention; the progress and diffusion of knowledge; the use of the magnet; the discovery of America; the growth of liberty; the present boundless commerce of the nations, opening innumerable channels

for our holy religion; the state of the Jews; the increased number of pious and praying people in the world (though still so small) since the Apostles *began* their heroic work; the amount and variety of benevolent institutions established of late, in aid of christianity; the awakened spirit of inquiry that has gone abroad on religious subjects; and the state of the world at large, are the results of God's providence, in behalf of the gospel: and afford to its ministers, facilities in this way, more various and ample than were ever enjoyed before. It involves no small accountableness to live in such a day. It were at once an interesting, curious, and, to us, reproving inquiry to ask, how the Apostle Paul would have improved such bold and manifold auxiliaries, in extending the knowledge of his beloved Lord!

6. WHERE IS THE HUMAN CONSCIENCE?

Does it not still respond, in real, though reluctant harmony, to the word of God? Is it not the recess in which, though in ruins, a religious nature is found? Is there not a way in men's hearts for some religion, and in the constitution of their nature for the christian? Is not the conscience *with* the faithful minister of Christ? And is there not now, as in primitive times, a footing, in that conscience, and that nature given, on which the herald of the cross may erect the standard and assert the claims of his injured sovereign? Thus the Lord of the conscience makes a way for "*the entrance of his*

word" into the "deep interior" of the soul, through the minister of reconciliation.

> "By him the violated law speaks out
> Its thunders; and by him in strains as sweet
> As angels use, the gospel whispers peace."

From a cursory consideration then, of these particulars, it most clearly appears, that the office, which the Head of the Church has committed to the ministers of the gospel for the conversion of the world, is accompanied, and sustained by the power of God, to the end of time; and THAT THE MAN OF GOD IS, or may be, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS, SO as to *make full proof of his ministry.**

The second proposition then is indisputably true, viz:—that the ministers of Christ if faithful to their trust, may have, in every age of the world, all the helps that were afforded to the Apostles themselves, *i. e.* all that are essential to the right and successful discharge of the duties of the office. It remains to consider,

III. THAT, AS IN EVERY AGE, THE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL HAVE THE OFFICE WHICH GOD APPOINTED FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD, and THE HELPS NECESSARY TO the RIGHT DISCHARGE OF ITS DUTIES: SO ANY FAILURE IN THAT GREAT WORK, MUST BE OWING TO A WANT OF THE PROPER SPIRIT AND CHARACTER: OR,

* 2 Tim. iii. 17, and iv. 5.

in other words, IF WE HAD THE SPIRIT OF THE APOSTLES, THEIR SUCCESS WOULD BE ESSENTIALLY OURS.

It has been shewn already, that every departure from the divine plan in this momentous service, is evil, and must fail to the degree of its deviation. By a very obvious inference, it would seem to follow, that our success will be to the degree of our conformity to this plan: for besides that it puts honour on the Divinity, implicitly, and with due reverence to submit to his arrangement, it is a laying hold on the *wisest* and *best* plan, and using aright the divinely-adapted-provisions of the system.

The spirit, therefore, which is appropriate to this sacred office, is all that can be wanting towards a suitable success.

Now, as the atmosphere is the proper element for the transmission of sound, and the figure of the sphere constitutes its facility for rotary motion, so there is an order of spirit and character, which is the fitness of a gospel-minister for his office, and will, to a very great degree, determine the measure of his success.

The model of this peculiar character is, in very striking terms, delineated in the word of God.

"*If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop must be blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, not self-willed, not given to wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, not a novice, not soon angry, a lover of good men, given to hospitality; holy, just, temperate, patient, apt to*

teach, holding fast the faithful word; in doctrine, shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity; in all things approving himself a minister of God; by pureness, by knowledge, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand, and on the left. He must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; must preach the word, being instant in season, and out of season, reproving, rebuking, exhorting with all-long-suffering, watching in all things, enduring afflictions, &c. so as to *make full proof of the ministry. He must take heed* to HIMSELF, AND TO HIS DOCTRINE, &C. CONTINUE IN THEM; GIVE HIMSELF WHOLLY TO THEM. While *many corrupt the word of God, he, as of sincerity, as God, in the sight of God speaks Christ,* and *suffers all things that the ministry be not blamed. In labours abundant, he endures hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* He *is given to prayer.* He *must be wise as a serpent, yet harmless as a dove;* and *not even count his own life dear, that he may finish his course with joy. Thus he becomes the representative of Christ to men; magnifies his office, glorifies God, is the salt of the earth; the light of the world.* To all such it is said, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*"*

* Epistles to Timothy and Titus passim: Math. v. 13, 14: 1 Cor. ix. 12: 2 Cor. ii. 17, &c. &c. &c.

Of the spirit thus described, the Apostles, without controversy, were the finest specimens ever exhibited to men. While we are to be "*followers even of them only so far as they were of Christ,*" we may yet, safely make them a standard for ourselves. The advantage of contemplating them as models, is, that we secure a subject for comparison. They must have understood the spirit of the ministerial commission conferred by our Lord, in the language of the text. They first received it: they first acted under it: and therefore we may fitly contrast their successors in the work of the gospel, with these primitive and princely models of the ministry.

In glancing rapidly at their spirit, the mention of such qualities as ardent personal piety; as a passionate love, if you will allow the phrase, for the Lord Jesus; as a fervent affection for each other—so that when they met and mingled together, it was not as ecclesiastical gladiators, contending for victory, but as amiable brethren consulting for the peace of Jerusalem; as a profound knowledge of divine things, and its kindred quality, a supreme regard for THE TRUTH; as prudence, common sense, humility, fortitude, zeal, &c. &c. will at once suggest corresponding features in the apostolic character.

While it will be impossible to dwell on this part of our subject, it is at the same time equally so, to do it justice without adequate examination. When therefore, we select and present to view, a few prominent traits,

they must be received only as specimens of *other* traits, and imperfect illustrations of the character from which they are derived.

1. THEIRS WAS EMINENTLY A SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

We say a spirit of prayer: for prayer, even true prayer, and a *spirit* of prayer, are very different things. One is an occasional service; the other is a business. "They GAVE THEMSELVES CONTINUALLY TO PRAYER, and *to the ministry of the word.*"* By this spirit they attracted to their office, the divine helps provided, and girded themselves with the strength of the Almighty. They prayed like Jacob, wrestling all night for the blessing; and as Abraham did when he urged with God before Sodom, the work of intercession—so that he did plead, and prevail and plead again, and made one case of success, the plea for another petition—and thus he knew not how to stop asking, nor God to stop answering! Thus the Apostles bore on their agonizing hearts to God, at a throne of grace, the cause of a world perishing in sin. Prayer was the habit of their souls; the occupation of their lives. Thus did the ancient prophets, and thus some of the reformers, pray: and if we may be permitted without irreverence, to pass the interval which separates his own, from all human examples, such was the blessed Master of us all, who spent whole nights in prayer to his Father in heaven!

* Acts vi. 4. and i. 14: Romans i. 9, &c.

Now fathers and brethren, do we thus feel ourselves set "*between the porch and the altar*," "*weeping*," and interceding, "*saying spare thy people O Lord?*"* Do we press God's promise home, and lodge it on the records of the skies, among the decreed things of God? Do we rise to that place where prayer is heard? Do we climb along the ascent of the promises, until, as it were, we strike the palpable heavens, and lay hold on the throne of God? If we did, we should be disappointed, when our prayers were not heard, and answered. Nay rather, we should not be disappointed; God would hear, and bless us!

2. THEY WERE MEN DISTINGUISHED BY THEIR FAITH.

The Apostles seem to have carried about them, a confidence in the wisdom and efficacy of the divine arrangement, for spreading the gospel, which nothing could impair. "*Setting the Lord always before them*," they "*went every where preaching the word*," expecting the presence, and relying on the agency of God, to give success to their labours. They considered themselves as constituting an enginery of moral causes, touched at every point, by the finger of God, "*and made mighty through him who is head over all things to the church:*"† and "they felt themselves immortal till their work was done." "*They walked by faith not by sight.*" They saw things as they are in the light of truth, in the judgment of God. They saw

* Joel ii. 17. † Ephes. i. 22, and 2 Cor. x. 4.

sin and death, heaven and hell, and all things, in their real nature, and their just proportions. They were invested with eternity. Thus this world became a shadow, and the next the substance: thus they learned on the scale of an eternal existence, the worth and danger of the soul, the value of time, and the goodness and glory of the divine Redeemer. They seem to have felt the presence of the deity ordinarily, as really, though not as terribly, as the ancient Israelites did, when "*Moses brought them forth out of the camp to meet with God as he descended on Mount Sinai:*" and to have felt habitually for sinners, as we do, when we see them dying without a Saviour: and they urged the work of the Lord with the intensity of men in a battle, who felt the real presence of enemies, dangers, and "all the circumstance of war." In proof of this, we need only point you to the history of their feelings and labours. as given to us in the word of God.

3. THEIRS WAS A SPIRIT OF UNRESERVED, SELF DEDICATION.

It was a spirit marked by no narrow seeking of personal aggrandizement: no selfish reserves, or partial surrenders: no asking, as of old, "*to be put into the priesthood, to get a piece of bread:*" no making of the pulpit, the sounding-board of their praise; or the church of the living God, a theatre for the display of learning, eloquence, and self, in the dress of the divine Redeemer. But they surrendered themselves wholly to the Saviour's service, and "*denying themselves,*

they left all, took up their cross and followed him." For the hope of Israel, they gladly suffered the loss of all that such men could lose. How noble the disinterestedness, how pure, and self-sacrificing the devotion to Israel's Redeemer, and to Israel's peace, which habitually felt and lived forth this sentiment, "*If I be offered, upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all!*"*

When the cruel Sanhedrim, afraid as yet, to glut its vengeance on their blood, had "beaten them," and sternly forbidden them "to speak again in the name of Jesus," "*they departed, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name; and daily, in the temple and in every house, ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.*" "*They gloried in tribulations.*" To the expostulations and the fears of his brethren at Cæsarea, who to save his valued life, "*besought him not to go up to Jerusalem, Paul answered; what mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus:*"† "and the offer of deification at Lystra, more disturbed the serenity of Paul and Barnabas, than all their injuries had done."‡ What ineffable dishonour do their magnanimous spirit and extraordinary labours, pour upon the ambition, the love of ease, the aversion to trials, and the fear of death, which have so frequently

* Phil. ii. 17. † Acts v. 41, 42, and xxi. 13. ‡ Mrs. H. More's St. Paul.

characterized their successors in the ministry of the gospel. With them to live was Christ; and therefore to die was gain, rich, and lasting as the glories of the skies. Blessed men! Illustrious Apostles! though the Holy Ghost did witness and experience rapidly confirmed the testimony, that in every city, and on every shore, bonds and imprisonment, and cruel mockings abode your coming: yet none of these things moved you; neither counted ye your own lives dear, that you might finish your course with joy, and the ministry which you had received of your beloved Lord!*

4. The Apostles were in an eminent degree, possessed of a missionary spirit.

The Apostolic college was a missionary band, organized and commissioned for the conversion of the world: and their duties, if not their spirit, have descended to their successors. By a missionary spirit, we mean one which rightly apprehends and fully feels, the responsibility of the ministerial office; and while it secures the entire possession, prompts to the proper use, of the divinely furnished helps of the service. It is a spirit which aspires steadily, to fulfil the commission our Master conferred in the text; a spirit which will act, while there is room for it to act; and if it weep not like Alexander for other worlds to win, will never pause, till it has pushed its conquests, to the last verge of this.

* Acts xx.

There was about the Apostles, an enthusiastic love for the souls of men, and a noble daring in doing good, which would now be called, (as it was in their day,) madness, by the cautious calculators of common causes and effects. They had the spirit of true heroic enterprize: they sunk not to the tame and timid quality, which delights in attempting little things, because success is easy, and failure brings no loss: nor did they rashly attempt things in themselves impracticable. *Practicable possibilities*, if we may be allowed to speak so, were their constant aim. Their plans were bold, and to the last degree, difficult and dangerous; yet, under God, always practicable, and almost always successful. They were as simple, as they were sublime. The world was their field; its salvation their prize. Deriving their "power" from the Son of God—"beginning at Jerusalem"—they pressed onward, and still onward, into all the world—over mountains, and over seas, over the demolished temples of heathen worship, over the crumbling thrones of earthly potentates, and the falling strong holds of the prince of darkness—erecting on their ruins the empire of love, the dominion of the Bible: until quite spent in the glorious toil, they sank into the arms of their attendant Lord: and there, as they fell, while their spirits sprang to the reward on high, they laid their lifeless bodies, as the land-marks of their progress, and the trophies of their triumphant career.

Thus they girt the globe with a zone of light, in less than half a century. Their *epitaph* is recorded in the New Testament, in language which in the Old, is used to describe the universal diffusion of light by the sun, in his daily progress round the world.* "His going forth is from the end of the heaven and his circuit to the end of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." In direct allusion to this it is written, "*how shall they hear without a preacher? But I say have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*"

Such was the Apostolic success; and the principle is, because such was the Apostolic spirit; since by the divine arrangement, the one is the consequence of the other. For it is spoken of in the word of God, not only in connection with their spirit in particular, but also in the form of general propositions, in which the success of faithful ambassadors of Christ, and the failure of those who are unfaithful to their trust, are respectively referred to this great principle. "*Oh my people, they that lead thee cause thee to err; they destroy the way of thy paths; and ye that are led of them are destroyed. I have not sent these prophets; hearken not unto their words, they make you vain; they speak a vision of their own hearts, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. The pastors have not sought the Lord; therefore they shall not pros-*

*Romans x. 18, compared with 19 Psalm 1—7, and Acts ii. 5—13.

*per. There shall be false teachers among you, who shall bring in damnable heresies; many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."**

So on the other hand, *"when the Lord giveth pastors according to his own heart,"* then *"the people are fed with knowledge and understanding."* *"I have set watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."* While this passage in the abstract, sustains the principle, it seems, without doubt, to refer to the times and the ministry of the New Testament church. *"If a man therefore, purge himself from these,* (that is, from the evils, &c. just recited as attaching themselves to wicked ministers,) *he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work."* *"Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity: give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine; meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all: take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them, for in so doing thou shalt*

* Isaiah iii. 12, and ix. 16; Jeremiah xxiii. 16, and x. 21; 2 Peter ii. 1, 2.

both save thyself, and them that hear thee. There shall be like people, like priest," &c. &c. &c.*

And does it not seem consistent, that there should obtain an analogy in this respect, between the religion of Christ, and the constitution and course of nature: that in the one as in the other kingdom, *things should produce their like:*† and that there should be the same certainty in moral as in natural causes? He who is alike the God of nature and the God of grace, has in his word adduced the operations of the world of matter, to illustrate the method, and to assure us of the certainty, of the operations of the world of mind. "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater—so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace, &c.; instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be unto the Lord for a name, (a memorial) for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off." "For ever O Lord *thy word is settled* in heaven: thy faithfulness is unto all generations; thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. *They continue this day*

*Jeremiah iii. 15; Isaiah lxii. 6, 7; 1 Tim. 4 chap.; Hosea iv. 9.

† Gals. vi. 7—9.

*according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants."**

"The voice that rolls the stars along,
Speaks all the PROMISES.

How reasonable too, does it appear that it should be so? that when a man goes forth unsanctified, and unattended, he should be unblest? and when he goes forth breathing the spirit, and sustained by the power of God—in the office, after the manner, and to the end appointed, that he should be blessed, and made to triumph in Christ Jesus? Such men as the Apostles, are specimens of what they preach to others; their lives become a mighty mean of conviction to the minds of men, being an accumulative moral evidence of the truth of christianity. They come forth as visitants from eternity, the bright and blessed ambassadors of heaven: and though bone of our bone, and girt to our nature by every strong and tender sympathy, the style of their character is novel and unearthly. It bodies forth to view, in a faint but faithful copy, the glories of that Redeemer, whose love and whose mercy they proclaim. While it tells men what to do, it shews them what to be; teaching as well by the life as by the doctrine; attracting, while instructing mankind.

And blessed be God, the testimony in real life of the truth of our principle, has never been withdrawn from the church of Christ. A Xavier, and a Vanderkemp,

* Isaiah lv. 10—13; Psalm cxix. 89—91.

and a Brainerd, and a Martyn, and a Wolfe; a Whitfield, a Davies and an Edwards, (not to mention many of other ages, and many yet spared to this,) have exemplified both at home and abroad, the Apostolic spirit, with much of the Apostolic success. They have confirmed to us the truth, that such a spirit, and such success, visit our earth in a wedlock-union, "joined together of God." From the great Apostle of the Gentiles, down to our Martyn, have they appeared in thin but bright succession, to reprove the clergy, to bless the church, and to adorn the age which bore them; the successors of the Apostles, the models of a true christian ministry, the pledges of that order of men, who are appointed to bring on the triumphs of the latter day—and like the prophets of the olden time, at once the condemnation and the glory of the world.

It is striking, here to remark, that ministers of the gospel, who have at distant intervals, been especially successful in "*turning many to righteousness,*" have commonly found those seasons preceded, and attended by an unusual degree (for them,) of the spirit which we have described, as eminently characteristic of the Apostles. And it has, for the most part been the fact, that this influence has *begun* with the pastor, then appeared in the people of God around him, and then in the hearts of repenting sinners. This is in accordance with the plan of God. Our ordinary lethargy, and lukewarmness in the ministry, unfit us for our work; and we must pass from this most unworthy state,

through a preparatory crisis, kindred in its nature, to that which immediately precedes the conversion of the soul. Or, in other words, when a minister is restored to the spirit of the gospel, when he puts on the whole armour of God, when he is really roused to an appropriate devotedness in the work of the Lord, and is baptized, as it were with the Holy Ghost, *then* Heaven is prepared to bless him; and on the steady and consistent exercise of such a ministry, the *continued effusion* of the Spirit might be with confidence expected.

It would appear then, that the success of the gospel, is made, in the divine arrangement, to depend upon the spirit of its ministers.

But some may be ready to say, "we freely own that the gospel eminently triumphed under the ministry of the Apostles, and that this was owing, under God, to their spirit. But then, what is the success of the gospel? Does it necessarily impart salvation in its triumph? Does not the Apostle Paul thank God, who always caused him to triumph in Christ, in them that perished, as well as in them that were saved?" We remark, in reply, that the various operations of the gospel, in restraining the crimes of men, in displaying the perfections and glory of God, and even in that fearful, judicial process, which is called by the same Apostle, "a savour of death unto death," may be esteemed the triumph of christianity. Yet "GOD SENT NOT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD:" the world was condemned already: "BUT

THAT THE WORLD, THROUGH HIM, MIGHT BE SAVED."*

All effects, therefore, short of the redemption of the world, though they may greatly contribute to the public good of the universe, and swell the tide of the divine glory, fail of the gospel's grand design. The "savour of death," accompanies the publication of the christian religion, as bloodshed and slaughter, attend the victories of a great and beneficent prince, while reclaiming a rebellious province of his empire. "*It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*"† Hence the appropriate influence of the truth preached by his ministering servants is not to destroy but to save.

But others, who admit this very obvious view of the *nature* of that success which is appropriate to the faithful ministrations of the gospel, may yet be disposed to start a question as to its *degree*. "How much is to be expected from each age, and each man? How much that is done must appear? And how soon is it to be expected?" The very suggestion of such inquiries would, we fear, disclose an unhappy ignorance of the genius of our holy religion. It indicates a kindred spirit to that which should ask, how much personal piety must I have in order to be saved? The soldier of the cross has a standard of achievements, indefi-

* John iii. 17. † 1 Timothy, i. 15.

nitely lofty, and a theatre of action indefinitely large. Its width and grandeur are adapted to the nature of the human, and especially of the christian soul. "The field is the world:" and his measure of devotion is, "*to be always abounding in the work of the Lord.*"* His office, his helps and his sphere of service invite the expectation of ample success. The shortness of human life, and its eternal issues; the mercy, and power, and promises, and faithfulness of his divine Redeemer; and the whole nature of the case, afford the earnest of speedy and continued results of good. "Now is the accepted time" for the sinner, to whom he is sent; "to-day is the day of salvation" under his ministry; *to-day* God is prepared to bless him: and whilst, (as it was with the Apostles, in an extraordinary measure,) the field of his labours may continue to "bring forth," when he has gone, there is yet to be expected an habitual, visible sequence of the effect upon the cause. Much may be impalpable, and to men, unknown, that is connected with the remote or general influences of the system; but in those effects of the gospel which "accompany salvation," there is a steady and intrinsic tendency to their own manifestation. Thus the faith of God's servants in the method of his grace, is from time to time confirmed; and thus the world is convinced by a continued demonstration, of the divine origin, and supports of christianity.

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

It appears then, that there is a *style of character* which constitutes the fitness of a gospel minister for his work; and that from the word of God; from the spirit and success of the Apostles; from the analogy of the christian religion to the constitution and course of nature; from the history of the ministry; and the experience of those who have, at different periods, been eminently useful in this office, this *style of character, or spirit,* is intimately connected with the appropriate success of the gospel in the world: and, therefore, though the Deity may use bad men to do good in his church, and good and faithful men may become the savour of death to the rebellious; yet as a great fact, his *true ambassadors will be blessed and made useful, in the degree of their devotion to his cause; and the false prophet, indignant heaven warns off with* its *fearful caveat,* "what hast thou to do to declare my statutes;" *or frowns out upon him in deserted ordinances, and expressive desolations!*

Having, therefore, arrived at this radical principle in the divine plan, we have but to look to the ministerial spirit of any age, to get a full reason for the state of the church and of the world during that age. Let us then, for a moment, apply this principle to the religious history of our own times.

We will not deepen the contrast of our own, with the apostolic spirit, by going over in the comparison, the several particulars, in which we summarily sketch-

ed their character: but let us institute a parallel on the last, as a measure for the rest.

WHAT THEN IS OUR SPIRIT OF MISSIONS? It is freely owned, that this spirit, in our day, greatly exceeds that of the ages before us; that it is rising in the church, and in the ministry; that it is not only increasing in amount, but improving in character; that examples are occasionally afforded us, of signal success in the foreign field; and that tokens of better things to come are displayed to the prospect of the age. But what are our numbers in the ministry, compared with their little band? We marshal more separate and populous communions than they numbered Apostles. We enumerate, in those protestant denominations, commonly conceded to hold what is called *saving truth*, for every Apostle, many hundred preachers; and they are endued with the essential functions, and have, or might have all the necessary helps of the ministry; and what are they doing? Did not THAT LITTLE BAND of apostolic spirits do more in their brief but brilliant day, than the *whole church* and its myriads of appended preachers are achieving now, for the salvation of the world? Does not Peter counterpoise the toils and the triumphs of "his thousand;" and Paul of "his ten thousand" modern ministers?

In that branch of the christian church to which we are attached, of which we may more freely and more accurately speak; and which is commonly esteemed not "behind the chiefest" of her sisters—how does

this subject appear? We have in the ministry or on its threshhold, some fifteen hundred men; and yet probably not one to one hundred in the foreign service: whilst the number of our people at home, is not to that of the heathen world, as one to one hundred! Awful fact! A two fold disproportion, and on each hand, how enormous! And yet neither are we the clergy, nor the people of our charge, in any visible measure, bestirring ourselves for a greater effort; or even reproaching and repenting us for the sad stagnation of this noble cause! on the contrary, ours is the language of self-gratulation at the superiority of our zeal, to the zeal of our fathers; and we boast of the *missionary spirit of the age!*

And then as to the DOMESTIC WORK, it is really true, that home-missionaries, though if devoted men, they stand well nigh abreast their brethren abroad, in toils, and "exploits" for the divine Redeemer, are esteemed an inferior order of clergy to local ministers. They are looked at as repudiated by our localities, and as wanderers, for want of talents to attract attention, and secure a home. We seem to think men must be local, to be respectable, or useful. Hence a system has arisen which is unspeakably injurious. The missionary spirit is well nigh banished; yes, by the public sentiment, and even ecclesiastical provisions of the church—legislated out of it. We have no established, authorized plan for a perpetual order of missionary men; and while in spots, "a garden smiles," over the

continent around, spreads a wilderness. The "travelling system" of our Wesleyan-Methodist brethren, excellent, in its place, is the opposite extreme to ours: and we suppose that a combination of both is essential to the supreme, and permanent success of either. The steady operation of such a system, not so extended in its circles of action, as to scatter the influence too thinly, with a reference to the settlement of pastors so soon as a people might be able, and disposed, must become the occasion of unbounded good. But as it is the "aggressive principle," *i. e.*, the missionary spirit of the gospel, has no adequate operation amongst us. We wait for men to cry for help, before we carry them the offer of the gospel. But the divine provision is, "go," and make them sensible of their wants, of which they are by no means aware, till the light of the preached word discloses them; and then their sense of ability to support a pastor, will grow with the desire to secure his labours.

And farther, even where these preliminary steps have been taken, and a pastor has been duly established, what is the general state? In how many of our congregations do the office, the helps and the spirit of the ministry, seem in active operation, and producing the promised results? And, not to speak of the interior deadness of the churches, what is their spirit of missions? what influence for the gospel, and for the wilderness of sin around, goeth forth from these nurseries of the truth? Is there any such missionary zeal, either

for the cause at home, or the cause abroad, as makes every man our neighbour, and impels us, in the tenderness and disinterestedness of the christian spirit, to love our neighbour as ourselves? and especially to love that immortal and perishing soul of our neighbour which constitutes all his value, and makes his breast a battle-ground on which heaven and hell hold high contention for supremacy?

It appears then, that the whole missionary enterprize has suffered, yes greatly suffered in our hands! and that the spirit of our day, with all its boasted triumphs, cowers at the side, not only of Paul and Barnabas, and James and John, but of Huss, of Luther and of Knox, in apostolical achievements for our Lord.

We shrink from the approach of toils, dangers and sacrifices in the Redeemer's cause. Amidst all the names, and marshalled administrations of the christian church, not one, the Moravians excepted, is avowedly missionary in its organization, and adopts as her birth-right, the perils and the glories of the foreign service. These high adventures fright us from the field. We have no spirit, no blood of martyrs. We are afraid to die for Jesus Christ. We seem to think blood spilt in such a cause, a wasteful sacrifice.

In winding up this protracted discussion, we think then we are permitted to repeat, as sufficiently proved and illustrated, the proposition with which we set out, viz: "THAT THE MINISTERS OF RECONCILIATION, BEING THE AUTHORISED FUNCTIONARIES IN THE GREAT WORK

OF CONVERTING THE WORLD, ANY FAILURE IN ITS SUCCESS, MUST ALWAYS BE OWING MAINLY, TO THEIR ABUSE OF THEIR SOLEMN TRUST." *For*, 1. *they have the office which God appointed as a standing ordinance, for the conversion of the world;* 2. *they have all the helps necessary to the right and successful discharge of the duties of the office; and therefore,* 3. *if they have the spirit, or form of character proper to the office, they must be successful.*

The following conclusions, omitting others, seem necessarily to proceed from the foregoing views; and need only to be stated, that their truth, and importance may at once be acknowledged.

Ministers of the gospel, are mainly responsible for the conversion of the world. It would have impaired the unity of the subject, to introduce into the discussion, remarks on the responsibility of the people of God as a church and as individuals, in reference to the subject in hand. But since ministers are officially set apart, and furnished for this work—and as a great fact, must succeed, if they are faithful to their trust—the conclusion is irresistible, that if they forbear to "go" and "preach the gospel to every creature," they are for *that*, accountable to God: if they "go" forth, not apprehending their official supports, nor possessing their official spirit, they cannot make full proof of their ministry, and hence they must fail; and for *that*, they are accountable. The church must account to God, for her criminal lethargy in this service; and

the revolted world bear the curse of a violated law, and a rejected Saviour; but upon the ministry of this and other ages, is devolved the awful charge, of abusing those means which are adapted to rouse and purify the church, and to overcome the resistance of the world—and of having thus, in a principal degree, contributed to retard the conversion of the world. It is a responsibility indefinitely great; and cannot be distributively divided unto each: but it is enough to make each of us tremble. Each should ask, "what obliged the Apostles more than us, to be foreign missionaries, and self-devoted servants of Jesus Christ? for how much of the present state of the church and world, shall I have to account? How much is there, that I could, and do not prevent, of the endless perdition of men? How much might I avail, in the hands of Heaven, if fully awake, and in action, toward the conversion of the world?" These questions must be met, if not before, at the judgment seat of Christ!

We learn in the light of this subject, the superlative importance of those institutions, which have for their object, the selecting, training, and sending forth youth of the right spirit and qualifications, to publish salvation to the perishing kindred and nations of the earth.

It is sufficiently apparent, that none should be induced to enter on this service, who are not entirely surrendered to the Lord, and endowed for the due performance of its high and holy functions. Yet "the

harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."*

In fine, so far as we see, the missionary cause cannot extensively triumph, without men of a spirit and order, almost unknown to the day in which we live.

There is a palpable disproportion between our spirit, and our field of enterprize. Do not our self-denial, and our zeal, and our devotion to the work, find their rivals in the every-day-achievements of patriots, and soldiers, and navigators for discovery, and in all the more kindling occupations of the world—though *things temporal* furnish all the motive to action, and their horizon takes its boundary from *the things that are seen?* We must recal the spirit of primeval days. Oh for other Pauls to lead us on to victory, in the name of Jesus! The stake must be restored to the catalogue of missionary honours, ere the sons of the church will awake, and come up to the help of their few heroic, but deserted brethren, who are kindling their watch fires, along the dark frontier of the heathen world. And do we want more Missionaries' graves! Already the bones of Martyn, and of Hall, and of Parsons, and of Fisk, and of other "*brothers beloved,*" both at home and abroad, speak out to us from the ground, and in murmurs that reprove delays, call us to the field in which they fell. May their tombs be points of attrac-

* Matthew ix. 37, 38.

tion, to the missionary spirit of the age! may their ashes give out life, like the bones of Elisha!

To the youthful soldiers of the cross, who are but now putting on them the armour of God, are the eyes of the universe directed as the best hope of weeping Zion, and a world perishing in sin. *"I write unto you young men because ye are strong."* You stand amidst the twilight of receding darkness, and the rising day of latter glory.* Assume then, the full helps, and true spirit of your sacred and peculiar office, and expand your desires and labours, to the utmost limit of that field, in which it was intended to expatiate. "Lift up your eyes; look on the fields; for they are white, already to harvest."† You are summoned to come up to the help of the Lord, against the mighty! With his vesture dipt in blood, he calls you to his side. If you can do no more, with Thomas say, "LET US GO THAT WE MAY DIE WITH HIM."‡

*Zechariah xiv. 6--10. †John iv. 35. ‡John xi. 16.

THE END.

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